

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-04

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /005 R

66630

DRAFTED BY: NEA/ INS: EWGNEHM: HME

3/15/73 EXT 20653

APPROVED BY: NEA/ INS: DTSCHNEIDER

----- 067671

R 160016 Z MAR 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 048639

FOLLOWING TEL SENT SECSTATE INFO DACCA ISLAMABAD
LONDON BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS FROM NEW DELHI 14 MARCH
REPEATED

QTE NEW DELHI 2956

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IN, PK, US

SUBJECT: ARMS TO PAKISTAN: MEA OFFICIAL'S VIEWS

1. SUMMARY: AT MARCH 13 SOCIAL FUNCTION JOINT SECRETARY MEA
PAKISTAN DIVISION ASHOK CHIB EMPHASIZED TO US CONSUL GENERAL
MADRAS PALMER AND TO EMBPOLOFF DIFFICULTY GOI FACES IN DEALING
WITH DOMESTIC REACTION TO POSSIBLE RESUMPTION US ARMS SUPPLY TO
PAKISTAN. CHIB SPECULATED THAT ONE OF BHUTTO' S OBJECTIVES IN
CURRENT SEMI- PUBLIC QUEST FOR US ARMS WAS TO TOUCH OFF INDIAN
PSYCHOSIS ON THIS ISSUE IN ORDER TO UNDERMINE WORKING OUT BETTER
INDO- US RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. CHIB, WHO HAD KNOWN PALMER AT ISLAMABAD, VOLUNTEERED THAT
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO' S COMMENTS BEFORE HFAC ON POSSIBLE
US ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN CAME AT PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TIME FOR
THOSE IN INDIAN GOVERNMENT WHO WERE INTERESTED IN PUTTING INDO- US
RELATIONS ON MORE SOLID BASIS. MEA OFFICIALS, HE SAID, HAD BEEN
REVIEWING IN RECENT WEEKS SPECIFIC STEPS THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN TO
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IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH US IN ANTICIPATION OF DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN. REACTION OF INDIAN PRESS AND PARLIAMENT TO SISCO' S COMMENTS ON ARMS TO PAKISTAN DID, HOWEVER, MAKE THE TASK MORE DIFFICULT. OPPOSITION, OF COURSE, HAD ALREADY SEIZED ON ISSUE AND WOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE TO FLOG IT FOR ALL IT WAS WORTH TO PUT GOVERNMENT OFF BALANCE. IN FACT, CHIB SAID, HE HAD BEEN OCCUPIED DURING DAY WITH COPING WITH FUROR IN PARLIAMENT; GREAT NUMBER OF QUESTIONS HAD ALREADY BEEN FILED RE SISCO' S HFAC STATEMENT AND HE EXPECTED THAT THIS WOULD BE TROUBLESOME ISSUE FOR GOI DURING COMING WEEKS.

3. CHIB SAID PAK PITCH TO US THAT ARMS WERE NEEDED TO RESTORE GREATER BALANCE IN SUBCONTINENT AND TO WARD OFF THREAT TO STABILITY SEEMED PARTICULARLY UNREASONABLE TO INDIANS. GIVEN NECESSITY FOR INDIANS TO DEPLOY MAJOR FORCES ALONG NORTHERN BORDER AND LACK OF ANY SIMILAR OUTSIDE THREAT TO PAKISTAN, CHIB BELIEVED THAT EFFECTIVE BALANCE IN INDIAN AND PAK FORCES ALREADY EXISTED. MOREOVER, INDIANS HAD OFFERED TO DISCUSS WITH PAKS AT SIMLA POSSIBILITY OF WORKING OUT SOME SORT OF MILITARY BALANCE THAT MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE TO PAKISTAN. PAKISTAN NEGOTIATORS, HOWEVER, HAD TURNED DOWN OFFER ON GROUNDS THAT CIVILIAN PAK GOVERNMENT COULD NOT JUSTIFY EVEN TACIT AGREEMENT IN THIS AREA TO MILITARY. AS FOR INDIAN THREAT TO INTEGRITY OF PAKISTAN, CHIB NOTED THAT AT TIME OF LANGUAGE RIOTS IN SIND PAKS HAD THANKED GOI FOR INDIAN RESTRAINT IN NOT STIRRING UP OR EXPLOITING ISSUE. MORE RECENTLY, CHIB SAID, MEA HAD DISCOURAGED ANY ADVERSE COMMENT BY INDIAN RADIO OR PRESS ON PAK GOVERNMENT' S DIFFICULTIES WITH BALUCHISTAN AND NWFP.

4. CHIB SAW ORCHESTRATION OF MOVES BY BHUTTO TO ACHIEVE RENEWAL US ARMS SUPPLY. THIS REGARD, DISCOVERY SOVIET ARMS AT IRAQI EMBASSY AND SPECTER OF SOVIET THREAT APPEARED TO BE RED HERRING. PAK RELATIONS WITH USSR WERE NOT BAD AS EVIDENCED BY VISIT SOVIET ECONOMIC MISSION TO PAKISTAN. CHIB BELIEVED ONE OBJECTIVE OF BHUTTO WITH RESPECT TO US ARMS WAS TO TOUCH OFF INDIAN PSYCHOSIS ON THIS ISSUE, THEREBY UNDERMINING INDO- US RELATIONS AND STRENGTHENING PAK BARGAINING POSITION WITH REGARD TO INDIA.

5. CHIB EXPRESSED FEAR THAT ANY RENEWAL OF US ARMS TO PAKISTAN WOULD BE WEDGE THAT BHUTTO COULD EXPLOIT. HE STRESSED THAT FOR GOI THIS WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT DOMESTIC PROBLEM TO DEAL WITH, PARTICULARLY AT TIME WHEN IT HOPED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH US. PALMER VOICED HOPE CHIB WOULD DO HIS BEST TO ENSURE THAT ANY
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ARMS SALE USG MIGHT BE CONTEMPLATING FOR PAKISTAN BE PUT IN

PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

MOYNIHAN UNQTE

ROGERS

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE048639
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/ INS: EWGNEHM: HME
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730331/aaaahxix.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <08-Jan-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971211
Subject: ARMS TO PAKISTAN: MEA OFFICIAL' S VIEWS
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, IN, PK, US
To: COLOMBO
KATHMANDU
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005